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Students Dissect Communism



Death gallery of purged Communists is shown students at the George Wythe High School in Richmond, Va. The class is studying Russian theories and practices.

By JERRY BUCK
RICHMOND, Va. (AP) — A full-scale attack on ignorance of the free world's greatest enemy — Communism — is being made by students at the George Wythe High School here.

A course which analyzes the goals and the workings of the Communist movement has been added to the curriculum, says the school board, in an effort to close a dangerous gap in American knowledge of Russia and its political beliefs.

Parents of the 350 students taking the courses have no fear that the schools are drumming a foreign ideology into their children. Instead, the classes knife through misty theories to lay bare the harsh realities of the Red menace.

One of the stated purposes of the class "is to contribute towards making the student's consideration of American government

more meaningful and to present a contrast to heighten his appreciation of democracy."

Endorsed by the American Bar Association and Allen W. Dulles, director of the Central Intelligence Agency, the course in Communism supplements an earlier program in the Russian language.

All Richmond high schools now offer courses in Russian, and 15 students are enrolled in an experimental course in the language in one seventh grade.

Lines Are Drawn.

Sprawling, modern George Wythe High School hardly seems like a battleground, but in a second-floor classroom 26-year-old Richard K. Crowell marshals his presentation with a flair for drama and satire.

On the first day of instruction he alerts his class that the "cold war is a war of ideas." He tells

classrooms, on the street corners and in the newspapers and other media of mass communications."

Crowell, a native of West Virginia who did graduate work in Ohio, finds his young students have a good grasp on the cold war. "They're weakest in the history of Communism," he said.

"They're more interested in things as they are now in the Soviet Union."

In the third week of the class the young instructor summarizes the brutal tactics Stalin used to entrench himself in power in the 1930s. He points to a student and says, "Tell me, what do we mean by purge?"

The student hesitates, draws his face into a puzzled mask and Crowell calls on another. He says he thinks a purge means to "get rid of, or clean out."

"Right," Crowell says. Holding up a book opened to a page of photographs of prominent Russian officials he reads a brief epithet for each: "Executed, executed, disappeared, exiled to Siberia, executed, disappeared."

Satire for Emphasis.

The teacher then uses George Orwell's "Animal Farm" to satirize the power struggle between Stalin and Trotsky. The story of the pigs who took over the farm was related to Stalin's maneuvers in forcing Trotsky's flight from Russia.

The students learn, too, that the "soft sell" and "peace offensive" has largely replaced terrorism, but are warned. "We're not really sure the Communists have done away with terror. In just the past few years," Crowell says, "it has cropped up again in Hungary, Guatemala, China, Cuba and other places."

Students are enthusiastic about the course. One student says, "Only a few Americans have any real understanding of the workings and goals of world Communism. Required courses in elementary and high schools would furnish the only hope for a wide understanding of democracy's strongest and most determined enemy."

The Communist classes are taught from an outline prepared by the teachers, but the headlines in the morning newspapers may alter the presentation and give it a sense of immediacy.

The driving force behind introduction of the course into Richmond schools is Lewis F. Powell, an attorney who was then chairman of the city school board. Gov. J. Lindsay Almond Jr. appointed him to the Virginia Board of Education earlier this year.